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**SB 21 Natural Resources State Parks – Maryland Golden Age Pass
Environment and Transportation Committee
April 1, 2026
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. My name is Larry Zarzecki, and I am a volunteer with AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland is proud to be one of the largest membership-based organizations in the state, representing nearly 850,000 members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 21, Natural Resources State Parks - Maryland Golden Age Pass. I want to thank Senator Simonaire for introducing this bill.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that empowers individuals to achieve their goals, strengthen communities, and advocate for critical issues affecting families, such as health care, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities, and protection from financial abuse.

Maryland's Golden Age Pass is a lifetime, low-cost program widely used by residents age 62 plus for free day-use entry and discounted camping at all Maryland State Parks. SB 21 builds on this already successful and established benefit that older Marylanders depend on. Fiscal and policy analysis confirms that SB 21 largely codifies existing regulations and practices, making it a high-impact, low-cost policy choice that maximizes equitable park access. It also allows day-use entry for everyone traveling in the same vehicle as the pass holder under specified conditions, benefiting multigenerational groups.

AARP has consistently championed policies that enhance the financial security and overall well-being of older adults. Promoting access to recreational spaces, such as parks, is one such policy, as it can improve physical and mental health while reducing financial burdens.

The positive impact of outdoor recreation on mental health is well-documented, with studies showing that exposure to nature can reduce depression, lower stress hormone levels, and decrease the need for certain medications. According to AARP's Travel Trends Survey, nearly two-thirds of Americans age 50 and older planned to travel in 2024, with 63 percent opting for domestic destinations, underscoring strong demand for accessible, affordable recreational opportunities close to home.

AARP Maryland strongly believes that Maryland should offer a program equivalent to the federal Golden Age Pass to ensure older adults have access to the benefits of nature and recreation within our state. We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 21.